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deceased brother and with the understanding that it shall be made available to students and public alike. A large part of the collection has been carefully mounted by the donor on sheets a good deal larger than usual (an advantage, perhaps, with ferns). In most cases there is much duplication, and generous display of material to illustrate geographical distribution. The collection is cosmopolitan. The following items give some idea of the scope of the bequest: Canada to Florida, New Mexico, Arizona and California (565 sheets); India and South India (537 sheets); Ceylon (228 species, 267 sheets); Jamaica (200 species); Trinidad (146 species); Sandwich Islands (100 species); New Zealand (nearly complete collection); New Caledonia, South Africa, Pacific islands and Madagascar (all very complete). Besides these, there are the herbaria of W. T. Atkinson (570 sheets, mostly North Indian ferns) and Dr. A. P. Garber (Phanerogams of Florida, 340 species). A valuable set of books, comprising the best of fern literature, also accompanies the plants.

It will thus be seen that Brown University acquires a collection of ferns almost as valuable as its fine set of Carices.—W. W. BAILEY, *Brown University*.

**Death from eating *Cicuta maculata*.**—Ann Arbor, Michigan, adds another to the already considerable list of poisonings due to this virulent plant. The mild days of last week melted the snow, brought back the birds, and induced a general spring time feeling, to which the children of a neighborhood on the outskirts of the city gave expression by digging and eating the artichokes that occur plentifully on some low ground bordering a brook. Two of these boys were soon taken violently ill, and the son of Julius Krueger, who was eight years old, died within an hour. The violent convulsions, marked dilation of the pupils, and other symptoms indicated some active vegetable poison. Search where the children had been digging brought to light a few suspicious branching tubers, somewhat resembling small dahlias. Their taste was quite suggestive of parsnips, and not particularly disagreeable at first, although less mild than artichoke. On cross section a yellow oily or resinous fluid exuded from a ring of glands in the cortex. No last year's stems could be found, but from the habit of growth, odor, taste, and general appearance of the tubers, and from some nascent leaves on the crown, there was little doubt to what plant they should be referred. A portion of the contents of the stomach of the dead boy afterward came into my possession, and microscopic examination showed the macerated fragments to be identical in structure with the tubers. Finally, an histological comparison with some dried tubers of *Cicuta maculata* preserved in the university herbarium completed the identification.

The extreme virulence of the poison may be inferred from the comparatively small amount of the tuber found in the stomach on *post-mortem*, and from the fact that the stronger boy, who vomited and recovered,

suffered from intermittent spasms more than four hours.—ERWIN F. SMITH, *Bot. Laboratory, Univ. of Michigan.*

**An exchange club for Thallophytes.**—The following official communication was received too late for the April number. It was sent in response to a suggestion by the editors of this journal that the arrangements being made to establish a botanical exchange club might well be extended to include the lower orders of plants, or else a similar but independent organization might be effected for that purpose, greatly to the advantage and convenience of many botanists:

SIRS: I am authorized by the Commissioner of Agriculture to say that the same arrangements made with the committee of the A. A. A. S. Botanical Club for facilitating exchanges of plants may be extended to include the thallophytes.

I shall take pleasure in carrying out the purposes intended.

Very respectfully,

F. L. SCRIBNER,

*Dept. of Agriculture, Section of Veg. Pathology.*

Washington, D. C., March 31, 1888.

As the letter shows, Commissioner Colman, with much liberality, impartially extends the facilities of his department to further the interests of the several classes of collectors, and Prof. Scribner kindly offers to undertake the same supervision of the thallophytes that Dr. Vasey gives to the higher plants. It now remains with the botanists of the country to arrange and perfect plans to put the system of exchanges into successful operation.

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## EDITORIAL.

THE ADVANTAGES of an organization to facilitate the interchange of herbarium specimens are so numerous and so obvious as to require no argument. The wisdom of the Botanical Club of the A. A. A. S. in setting a scheme on foot for supplying the need of American botanists in this respect meets with general favor. Although not so specified in the reports of the club, and of its special committee yet it is evident that only flowering plants and vascular cryptogams were kept in view by the promoters of the plan. The number of collectors and students of fungi in the United States is large, and the advantages of securing systematic exchanges among them are quite as great, if not greater, than among collectors of higher plants. So far as we know, the matter has not been agitated; but, feeling the need of some such facilities ourselves, and thinking others might also, we took the initiative by securing the good offices of Commissioner Colman and Prof. Scribner, as stated in another part of this number. We hope the subject will be discussed by those who are interested, and plans developed for eventually putting the matter into successful operation. Whether it is best to have only one exchange